

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A remote control, comprising:

a button having an associated means for indicating that the button may be operated to interact with interactive program content;

a receiving circuit for accepting a transmission received from a source external to the remote control;

a controlling circuit linked to the receiving circuit and the means for indicating where the controlling circuit functions to activate the means for indicating in response to receipt of the transmission by the receiving circuit; and

a transmission circuit for transmitting a signal to a target external to the remote control in response to activation of the button wherein the controlling circuit allows transmission of the signal to the target external to the remote control in response to activation of the button only when the means for indicating is activated.

2. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the button is a hard button.

3. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the button is a soft button.

4. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the means for indicating comprises a visual means.

5. (Original) The remote control as in claim 4, wherein the visual means comprises a means for selectively modifying the appearance of the button.
6. (Original) The remote control as in claim 5, wherein selectively modifying the appearance of the button comprises animating the button, illuminating the button, or changing the color of the button.
7. (Original) The remote control as in claim 6, wherein selectively modifying the appearance of the button is performed intermittently.
8. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, further comprising a label associated with the button indicating the nature of the functionality provided by the button.
9. (Original) The remote control as in claim 8, wherein the label resides on the button.
10. (Original) The remote control as in claim 8, wherein the label resides adjacent the button.
11. (Original) The remote control as in claim 8, wherein the label comprises alphanumeric characters.
12. (Original) The remote control as in claim 8, wherein the label comprises a graphical

symbol.

13. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the receiving circuit comprises an IR receiver.

14. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the receiving circuit comprises an RF receiver.

15. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the transmitting circuit comprises an IR transmitter.

16. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the transmitting circuit comprises an RF transmitter.

17. (Original) The remote control as in claim 1, wherein the signal comprises data for use in making a purchase, answering a question, or initiating a multimedia program.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for controlling operation of a remote control having a button and an associated means for indicating that the button may be operated to interact with interactive program content, comprising:

activating the means for indicating in response to a transmission received by the remote control from a source external to the remote control; and

allowing the remote control to transmit a signal in response to activation of the button only when the means for indicating is activated.

19. (Original) The method as in claim 18, wherein the button is a hard button.

20. (Original) The method as in claim 18, wherein the button is a soft button.

21. (Original) The method as in claim 18, wherein the means for indicating comprises a visual means.

22. (Original) The method as in claim 21, further comprising selectively activating the visual means to modifying the appearance of the button.

23. (Original) The method as in claim 22, wherein selectively activating the visual means to modifying the appearance of the button comprises animating the button, illuminating the button, or changing the color of the button.

24. (Original) The method as in claim 22, wherein selectively activating the visual means is performed intermittently.

25. (Currently Amended) A method for signaling a user to provide a response to a prompt via a remote control, the method comprising the steps of:

displaying the prompt to the user via an entertainment system;

receiving at the remote control a transmission from the entertainment center, the transmission including data used to modify the appearance of at least one of a plurality of buttons on the remote control; and

~~controlling~~ modifying the appearance of ~~the~~ at least one of a plurality of buttons on ~~the a-remote control used with the entertainment system~~ in accordance with the data in the transmission received from the entertainment center to indicate to the user that a response may be made to the prompt through operation of the button.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) The method as in claim 25, wherein ~~controlling~~ modifying the appearance of the button comprises animating the button, illuminating the button, or changing the color of the button.

28. (Currently Amended) The method as in claim 25, wherein ~~controlling~~ modifying the appearance of the button is performed intermittently.

29. (Currently Amended) A system for facilitating and encouraging user interaction with program content, the system comprising;

an entertainment system for providing and displaying the program content, including a prompt which requests a response from the user, and for transmitting at least one instruction to the remote control; and

a remote control having at least one button, the remote control being responsive to the instruction for modifying the appearance of the at least one button in accordance with the instruction from a first displayed state to a second displayed state to indicate to the user that a response may be made to the prompt via operation of the at least one button while the appearance of the at least one button is in the second displayed state.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim ~~29~~ 30, wherein the remote control has programming means for selectively modifying the appearance of the at least one button by comprises animating the button, illuminating the button, or changing the color of the button.

32. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim ~~29~~ 30, wherein selectively modifying the appearance of the at least one button is performed intermittently.

33. (Original) The system as in claim 29, wherein the instruction comprises a data signal including at least a control command identifier for indicating that the instruction is a button based command.

34. (Original) The system as in claim 33, wherein the button based command comprises data indicative of a button mode, button color, and button on time.

35. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 33, wherein the control command identifier further includes a command for restricting operation of the remote control such that only the at least one button indicated by the instruction may be operated.

36. (Original) The system as in claim 35, wherein the command for restricting operation is activated for a preset time period.

37. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 29, wherein a first button and a second button are included on the remote control and the instruction includes a first button based command for modifying ~~controlling~~ the appearance of the first button in accordance with the first button based command from a first displayed state to a second displayed state and a second button based command for modifying ~~controlling~~ the appearance of the second button in accordance with the second button based command from a first displayed state to a second displayed state.

38. (Currently Amended) The system as in claim 37, wherein the first button based command functions to modify the appearance of the first button to indicate to the user via the second display state of the first button that a first response to the prompt may be made via operation of the first button, and the second button based command functions to modify the appearance of the second button to indicate to the user via the second display state of the second button that a second, alternate response to the prompt may be made via operation of the second button.

39. (Original) The system as in claim 38, wherein the first response is an affirmative response, and the second response is a negative response.

40. (Currently Amended) A method for notifying a user of an event via a remote control, the method comprising the steps of:

 sending at least one instruction from an entertainment system to the remote control, the at least one instruction specifying at least one of a plurality of buttons on the remote control;

~~controlling~~ illuminating an element associated with the appearance of at least one of ~~the~~ a plurality of buttons on ~~the~~ a remote control specified in the at least one ~~via the~~ instruction to notify the user of an event .